December 7, 2018

Medical Alert – Syphilis Update

The increase in syphilis cases in the region is ongoing and the number of communities affected have increased. NWHU have been investigating cases in Kenora, Dryden, Fort Frances and a few smaller communities. Risk factors for syphilis include multiple sexual partners, sex worker, substance misuse, being under-housed or homeless, other sexually transmitted infections, MSM or a sexual partner of a high risk individual.

Northwestern Health Unit (NWHU) continues to do case and contact follow up, risk factor analysis, and have increased communication and programming to high risk groups.

Please consider:

- Testing for syphilis and other sexually transmitted infections for those who are at risk.
- Completing NWHU forms on any case you test/identify.
- Testing during pregnancy:
  - Universal screening of all pregnant women during the first trimester.
  - Screening test should be repeated at 28-32 weeks and again at delivery in women at high risk of acquiring syphilis. More frequent re-screening may be considered.
- Testing patients with a rash as this could be a sign of syphilis; the rash is typically on the palms, soles and flexor areas of extremities.
- Providing counselling to patients on importance of condoms and dental dams; these are available from NWHU at no charge for distribution through your clinic.
- Treatment for sexually transmitted infections can be made available at no charge; please contact NWHU to arrange for free medication through your clinic.
- Notifying Northwestern Health Unit if you suspect a diagnosis of syphilis.

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Resources

Testing:

Syphilis Serology - Public Health Ontario
Syphilis serology testing update (2017) - Public Health Ontario
Syphilis - Chancre - Direct Fluorescence - Public Health Ontario
Syphilis - CSF - Public Health Ontario

Treatment:

Canadian Guidelines on Sexually Transmitted Infections - Syphilis
2016 Updates to the Canadian Guidelines on Sexually Transmitted Infections

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